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SUBJECT: URIBE OPENS CARTAGENA COORDINATION AND COOPERATION CONFERENCE

1. Summary: On February 3 in Cartagena, President Uribe addressed representatives of 28 nations and multilateral organizations (still termed the G-24) at the day-long International Coordination and Cooperation Conference for Colombia. Uribe stated that Colombia is not in conflict, but rather a robust democracy destabilized by terrorists committing violent acts. He called upon the Congress to pass a truth, justice, and reparations bill to govern the demobilization and reinsertion of members of illegal armed groups (IAGs). Regarding the FARC, Uribe stressed there would be no demilitarized zone and that guerrillas released from prison would not be allowed to return to lives of crime. He blamed an intransigent ELN Central Command (COCE) for lack of progress in talks facilitated by Mexico (suggesting that earlier reports of an imminent meeting in Mexico were premature). During the rest of the morning session, GOC officials including Interior and Justice Minister Pretelt, Peace Commissioner Restrepo, Cooperation Coordinator Hoyos, National Planning Director Montenegro, and Interior Ministry Reinsertion Program Coordinator Angel provided overviews of key issues.

2. Summary (continued): VP Santos and FM Barco presided over the afternoon session during which G-24 members and various multilateral organizations offered critiqued the state of play in Colombia since the 2003 London Declaration. U.S. Delegation head USAID Administrator Natsios reiterated strong support for Colombia's fight against terrorism and narcotics trafficking. He lauded Colombia for effectively managing development assistance and urged other nations to up their contributions. Chilean Foreign Minister Ignacio Walker noted his country's "absolute, unconditional support" for Colombia's peace process. Most of the remaining interventions, including those by the EU President (Luxembourg), other EU members, and Canada, cited progress but called on the GOC to implement the 27 recommendations of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) and to adopt a truth, justice, and reparations bill to deal with the paramilitary peace process. Many suggested that financial support for demobilization would follow these steps. End Summary.

3. On February 3, President Uribe opened the International Coordination and Cooperation Conference for Colombia with an impassioned, 65-minute speech to delegates from 28 nations and multilateral organizations (text of speech emailed to WHA/AND). Just prior to the speech, Uribe held a breakfast meeting with AID Administrator Andrew Natsios, the U.S. Delegation Head, State WHA DAS Charles Shapiro, and the Ambassador (septel).

ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT URIBE

4. Uribe challenged the use of the term "conflict" to describe Colombia's internal situation. Instead, Colombia's society, economy, and democratic institutions were under attack from terrorists. He followed with a vigorous defense of Colombia's democracy, including the presence of elected mayors in virtually all municipalities. He cited electoral successes of candidates from a wide spectrum of political parties as well as complete freedom of expression, and stressed that his "Democratic Security Policy" protects all Colombians, regardless of political philosophy or ideology.

5. Turning to the peace processes with guerrilla groups, Uribe said that cease-fires were urgent but that disarming and demobilization required patience. Regarding the FARC, Uribe noted three GOC conditions:

--The GOC would not consider a demilitarized zone;  
--Released guerrillas would not be allowed to return to lives of crime; and  
--The GOC must act in accordance with current laws; in particular, individuals who have committed crimes against humanity cannot be released or pardoned.

6. On the ELN front, Uribe welcomed Mexico's facilitator role and blamed intransigence and vanity on the part of the ELN Central Command (COCE) for the failure to attain real progress. Uribe criticized COCE members for being "arrogant, messianic, and fundamentalist."

17. Regarding the paramilitary peace process, Uribe noted the successful demobilization of some 6000 AUC members and announced that Congress had been called into special session for the week of February 14 to begin debate on a truth, justice, and reparations bill. He called for a legal framework for demobilization that is "credible, equitable, and universal," and strikes an effective balance between justice and peace. He stressed that individuals who committed crimes against humanity would be imprisoned.

18. On socioeconomic issues, Uribe blamed narcoterrorists for Colombia's "social tragedy" and its lack of private enterprises. He noted that during his Administration tax revenue as a percentage of GDP had risen two percentage points to 19 percent, a level comparable to many developed countries. Uribe closed with a brief overview of GOC activities and spending on education and health care.

#### OTHER GOC PRESENTATIONS

19. Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo provided an overview of the ongoing peace process with the paramilitaries (AUC) and negotiations with the ELN. He offered specifics on the numbers of demobilized AUC members and stressed the importance of the reduction of the number of actively armed individuals. Interior and Justice Minister Sabas Pretelt addressed issues related to the legal framework for the paramilitary demobilization process. Septel will report details of both the GOC and the Pardo Congressional group truth, justice, and reparations bills to be considered in the special session of Congress to convene on February 15.

#### INTERGOVERNMENTAL DIALOGUE: USAID ADMINISTRATOR'S REMARKS

10. In response to Uribe, USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios framed his remarks in terms of the donor consensus derived at the 2002 Financing for Development Conference in Monterrey (see Natsios' text for the record emailed to WHA/AND). He noted the dual elements of the Monterrey Consensus--a commitment by developed countries to increase ODA and a commitment by developing countries to reforms to enhance the impact of development assistance. With respect to the latter, Natsios underscored Colombia's impressive record of achieving results: doubling economic growth rates, reducing human rights abuses, and reducing corruption (noting that according to Transparency International, Colombia was the country which had improved the most over the past two years). He urged other countries to increase their support because Colombia represented a good return on their investment due to robust democracy and the existence of a locally written national development plan that was being implemented and had wide popular support. Natsios also welcomed internal debate on the peace process, stressing that historically such processes are only lasting if local actors play a key role in their development and implementation. (The text of the Natsios' prepared remarks can be found on the Embassy website, [usembassy.state.gov/colombia](http://usembassy.state.gov/colombia).)

#### INTERVENTIONS BY OTHER DELEGATIONS

11. Chilean FM Ignacio Walker, in turn, offered "absolute, unconditional support" for Colombia. He stressed the importance of respect for human rights in the democratic process and thanked the assembled nations for their support for Chile's democratic transition in the 1990s.

12. European Delegations and Canada focused their remarks on the need for the GOC to implement the UNHCHR recommendations and adopt a legal framework for the peace process, and that financial support for the peace process, including the ongoing demobilizations of the paramilitaries, would follow. Luxembourg, speaking on behalf of the EU as rotating president, stressed that GOC implementation of the London Declaration was a cornerstone of EU-Colombia relations and noted four areas of EU support for Colombia: strengthening democracy and institutions; improvement in human rights practices; counter-narcotics; and respect for the environment and biodiversity. Luxembourg also called on the IAGs to commit to genuine cease-fires.

#### THE CARTAGENA DECLARATION

13. At the end of the afternoon session, members of the G-24 adopted the Cartagena Declaration, which had been negotiated among G-24 members and with the GOC over the last few weeks, as a follow-up to the London Declaration of July 10, 2003. The text highlights progress in

Colombia since London and reflects Uribe's successful efforts to update the characterization of the internal situation in the country. Although there is an explicit call for the GOC to adopt a credible legal framework for ongoing demobilizations and that international support would follow only after such a step was completed, press reports declared the text a strong endorsement of the Uribe Administration's efforts to bring peace to the country.

14. BEGIN INFORMAL TRANSLATION (Spanish text emailed to WHA/AND):

On February 3 and 4, 2005, the second meeting of the Group for Coordination and International Cooperation for Colombia took place in Cartagena de Indias, with the aim of continuing the political and co-operation dialogue begun in London on July 10, 2003.

The meeting was opened by the President of the Republic of Colombia, Alvaro Uribe Velez, and was attended by high-level representatives of the governments of Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, the U.S., Japan, Mexico, Norway, Switzerland, the EU and its member states, the European Commission, the UN system, the CAF, the IDB, the IMF, the World Bank and the Colombian government.

Colombia was represented by the President and Vice President of the Republic, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Peace Commissioner, the Director of the National Planning Department and the Presidential Adviser for Social Action, who presented progress achieved by government policies as well as in the different peace processes, in human rights and in the national strategy for international cooperation.

The government representatives present, members of the G-24, reaffirming the London declaration, underlined the importance of the process begun there. Furthermore, they recognized the efforts made, the mechanisms established, such as the follow-up committee, and the results achieved by the Colombian government in relation to the aforementioned declaration. The participants welcomed favorably the points of view put forward by civil society as an important contribution to the construction of a dialogue leading toward peace.

The governmental representatives present reaffirmed their support for the Colombian government in its efforts to improve the well being and security of all citizens, and in the fight against terrorism and illegal drugs. They recognized the progress being made within a democratic context, improving governability, promoting the presence of the institutions of state and the organs of control to assure respect for the law and human rights, and, where applicable, International Humanitarian Law, throughout the country.

They supported the efforts and recognized the progress made in the search for a peaceful negotiated solution to the situation of internal violence generated by the conflict with the illegal armed groups, highlighting the work undertaken by the office of the UN Secretary General, the OAS, the Catholic Church, the Mexican government and those of other countries.

They demanded that the illegal armed groups commit themselves to a cessation of hostilities and a meaningful peace process, respect International Humanitarian Law and all the rights of all Colombians, stop attacking the civilian population, recruiting minors, and extorting, stop the production and export of illegal drugs and free immediately all hostages. In this context, they underlined the benefits that could be gained from a humanitarian agreement taking into account the rule of law and International Humanitarian Law.

They stressed the importance and relevance of the processes of disarmament, demobilization and reinsertion that have been taking place. They underlined the need to complete the existing legal framework with legislation that would allow the realization of the principles of truth, justice, and reparation; furthermore, this would allow additional support to be given to these processes.

They highlighted the progress made and the willingness of the government and state institutions to work towards the implementation of the recommendations of the UNHCHR, and encouraged them to continue their efforts in order to obtain results as quickly as possible. In this sense, they underlined the importance of the government's initiative in developing a National Human Rights Action Plan, and its intention to draw it up in collaboration with a wide cross-section of Colombian society in order that it should contribute to the construction of an environment favoring harmonious co-existence, justice, and

the construction of the fabric of society. They took note of recent changes to the legal system, aimed at the strengthening of justice and of the fight against impunity.

Recognizing the advances made, they urged the government to continue to strengthen its presence throughout the country, stressing the need to reinforce existing measures to guarantee the right to life and freedom of expression of trade unionists, journalists, human rights defenders, and civil society leaders in their important and legitimate work, urging it to maintain its firm commitment in this area. They made a strong call to the illegal armed groups to respect these rights.

They repeated their demand that the illegal armed groups should comply with the UNHCHR recommendations addressed to them.

They congratulated the Colombian government for the recent destruction of mines stored by the armed forces, in fulfilment of the Convention on the Prohibition, Use, Storage, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and their Destruction. They recognized this step as another illustration of Colombia's commitment to the consolidation of International Humanitarian Law. They demanded that the illegal armed groups stop immediately the production and use of anti-personnel mines.

They recognized the government's efforts to improve the serious conditions faced by vulnerable sectors of the population, especially the displaced, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, and urged it to continue these efforts. They expressed the need to strengthen attention to this still worrying humanitarian situation. In this sense, they expressed support for efforts to find lasting solutions, such as the National Plan of Integrated Attention to the Displaced Population and the Humanitarian Action Plan, discussion of which remains to be concluded.

They highlighted the importance of the process of discussion for the development of the International Cooperation Strategy in which national public bodies, the international community and civil society all played an active part. At the same time, they welcomed the government's willingness to open up spaces for democratic participation and urged it to continue working in this way.

They committed themselves to continue supporting, in a determined and concrete way, the International Cooperation Strategy, in line with the priorities established in the six thematic blocks: forests; re-incorporation into civilian life; productive and alternative development; strengthening the rule of law and human rights; regional peace and development programmes, forced displacement and humanitarian assistance. In this context they recognized the commitment of the governments to the Millennium Goals.

They highlighted the support given by the international community and the importance of dialogue and cooperation between the government of Colombia and civil society in all its diversity, including the private sector. They reaffirmed their commitment with the government to continue working in a co-coordinated way, with the participation of civil society and the relevant international bodies, within the framework of the London process.

END TRANSLATED TEXT. WOOD